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CATCH-WORDS IN AMERICAN MYTHOLOGY.<sup>1</sup>

BY A. L. KROEBER.

IN a recent number of the *Journal* Mr. R. H. Lowie lists a number of catch-words for the convenient recognition and indication of concepts in American Indian mythology. The idea has for some years been agitated by Dr. Boas, to whom credit is due for the realization of the value of this method of approaching the problem of handling so large a body of material as American traditions have now come to constitute.

Mr. Lowie has wisely collected a number of names of myth episodes which have already attained to a certain usage, and has shown much skill in concisely and distinctly designating others for which such handles have been lacking. The value of his work can be nowise diminished by the following comments on certain of his new terms. In the list of concepts that makes up the principal part of this contribution, representing some of the more conspicuous ideas in the material published on the mythology of aboriginal California (the field with which the writer has of recent years been most familiar), Mr. Lowie's methods are followed, and the list may be regarded as a supplement to his.

Mr. Lowie's *Rip Van Winkle* does not seem appropriate, because in American myths the hero does not sleep away the years, the essential point being that supernatural days are the equivalent of human years. This contrast, and not the unobserved passing of time, should be designated. *Day-years* is perhaps satisfactory.

*Burr-woman* is a new name for Sinbad's familiar *Old Man of the Sea*, and it is doubtful whether anything is to be gained by the attempted innovation.

*Inexhaustible* seems preferable to *Fortunatus' scrip, vessel, food, dish*, because self-explanatory.

*Achilles' heel* should not be made to include the idea of the heart being in the little finger or tip of the nose. Achilles is invulnerable except at one point. The American bear or monster (not hero) is usually vulnerable everywhere, but cannot be permanently destroyed until the one part containing the vital spark is eradicated.

*Hoarded game* sometimes includes vegetable food as well as game and fish. The securing of the hoarded food for the world by deceit of some sort is usually an essential part of the motive. It is thus related to the *Theft of fire*.

*Invincible missile* is perhaps a misprint for *Invisible missile*. *Missile invisible to spirits* is more precise, as the essence of the concept is that

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only a human being can see the human weapon. *Invisible missile*, without further qualification, is liable to confusion with the much more common shamanistic belief in the death-dealing missile of the ghost, spirit, or witch, but invisible to *human* eyes.

DESIGNATION OF CONCEPTS OCCURRING IN MYTHS AND TALES OF  
THE CALIFORNIA INDIANS.

1. *Theft of sun (luminaries, light).*  
Analogous to theft of fire. The Yurok tell also of the theft of night, of water, of food.
2. *Creation in a vessel (under cover).*  
Creation of men, or animals, in a basket, from a bundle, under a blanket.
3. *Skunk-shaman.*  
The skunk, pretending to be a shaman, kills his patient by shooting.
4. *Abandonment on tree.*  
Son or younger brother abandoned on tree which grows upward or the branches of which are blown away.
5. *Impostor in skin of victim.*  
Often the Frog-Woman or Coyote.
6. *Gambler-conqueror.*  
A young man wins back property or people lost in gambling.
7. *Creator's grandmother.*  
The Creator is described as without relatives except for a casually mentioned grandmother. (Hupa, Curtin's Wintun.)
8. *Split-tree test.*  
Hero is made to undergo danger of entering a partly split tree, from which the wedges are treacherously withdrawn.
9. *Dirty boy.*  
A dirty boy, or boys, are repudiated by sister-in-law or parents. Usually an incident in the *Deformed transformed* motive.
10. *Separation of nations.*  
Unseparated tribes are divided and assigned by leader of people.
11. *Mankind's journeying.*  
Mankind, still unseparated, or the people, wander.
12. *Determination of world's centre.*  
By reaching to its ends.
13. *Antelope and deer race.*  
As told by the Pawnee, Blackfoot, Yokuts.
14. *Pleiades-girls.*
15. *Twin monster-destroyers.*  
Wherever it occurs, *Lodge-Boy and Thrown-Away*, which has a more restricted distribution, is usually combined with this motive.
16. *Eats only tobacco.*  
A hero craves smoke, but never eats.

17. *Cuckold loses luck.*  
A man's wife is deceived in order that he may lose in gambling.
18. *Armed vagina.*  
With teeth, flint, rattlesnake, but made harmless.
19. *New creation shouted away.*  
Because still unstable.
20. *Mæander-pursuit.*  
A fugitive's doublings cause a river's windings.
21. *Lizard-hand.*  
The human hand is fashioned on the lizard's.
22. *Cannibal meteor.*  
Luisefio Takwish, Dieguefio Chaup, Mohave Kwayu.
23. *Obtaining by reaching.*  
A needed object is secured by reaching in a certain cardinal direction.
24. *Flute-attracted bride.*  
Based on custom, but in myth the girl has usually rejected many previous suitors.
25. *Swallowed louse.*  
A swallowed louse causes pregnancy. An allied idea is that a monster's parasites are required to be devoured, but a substitute is secretly provided. The idea in this case is therefore the avoidance of a task, and the story a form of the "test" group.
26. *False creation from fæces.*  
A trickster temporarily aids himself with creations from his fæces, which in the end fail him.
27. *Contest of dogs.*  
Two opponents test their powers by their dogs.
28. *Smoke-sign.*  
Rising smoke is a sign of the creation or momentous event.
29. *Swallowed poison-receptacles.*  
Enable poison to be eaten or smoked without injury.
30. *Dug-from-the-ground.*  
A familiar hero-origin.
31. *Boy and grandmother.*  
All his kin having been destroyed, a boy is brought up by his grandmother alone, finally avenging his relatives.
32. *Sleepers' hair.*  
The hair of sleeping people is fastened to the ground, or together, before an attack or flight.
33. *Departing house.*  
Hero, in departing, takes his house with him.
34. *Arrow-flight.*  
Person flies with his arrow. Compare the frequent Ball-flight of the Plains.
35. *Girl-bear.*  
A girl becomes a devouring bear or monster attacking her own kin.

36. *Marplot.*

Opposition between the Creator or world-benefactor and his malicious or foolish companion.

37. *Brother-lover.*

A brother or sister is infatuated and becomes the lover of the other.

38. *Daughter-marriage.*

The trickster pretends death to marry his own daughter.

39. *Proposed rejuvenation.*

Old people or the dead are to be rejuvenated or reborn, but the plan is abandoned.

40. *Slit organs.*

Eyes, fingers, nose, mouth, or anus are lacking, and have to be slit or bored before functions can be exercised.

41. *Misplaced genitalia.*

Genitalia are at first placed on head or breast, children produced from elbow or leg, cohabitation is not understood, or mother destroyed to bring child into the world.

42. *Disguised boy.*

A boy whose life is in danger from his relatives is brought up disguised as a girl.

43. *Game with ancestor's bones.*

A boy sees and interrupts a game played with the bones of his father or other murdered relative.

44. *Water from belly.*

Water or a lake originates from the pierced or burst belly of one who has over-drunk.

45. *Opposite of present.*

Course of rivers, height or position of mountains, human reproduction, etc., are at first the reverse of present condition.

46. *Escape to stars.*

Pursued or pursuers, or both, unawares or deliberately, rise to the sky and become stars.

47. *Dying culture-hero.*

A fundamental motive in Southern California mythology, not without parallels elsewhere.

48. *Death thought sleep.*

A dead person revived thinks he has only slept.

49. *Closing tree.*

A hollow tree grows together, imprisoning a refugee.

50. *Origin of death — by folly or haste, by hostile desire, or by wise foresight.*

All three forms are found in California. From elsewhere may be added, as causes, a mistake or carelessness, and an unsuccessful trial or contest.

51. *Originator of death the first sufferer.*

In the person of his son. A special idea of the *Trickster tricked* type.

52. *Departed race.*

A previous race, similar to mankind, and the originators of culture.

53. *Creation of man — from earth, wood, feathers, or excrement.*

Other characteristic materials, such as ears of corn, are employed elsewhere.

It is evident that any empirical fixation of ideas must result in many cross-classifications. This is inevitable, but can be compensated for by subordinating incidents under more general ideas. Thus the *Eye-juggler*, however well determined by its specific concrete content, is only a form of the endlessly varied *Unsuccessful imitation*. The *Theft of fire* groups with the *Theft of the sun, of light, of game and food, of water, of night*. The *Rolling head*, the *Rolling rock*, the *Magic flight*, the end of the *Bear and deer* incident, and others, all contain the idea of a successful escape from pursuit. At the same time an outright combination of such related motives and disregard of these as such, obscures essential characters and makes the more general types of mythical ideas of less significance, not only through depriving them of specific content, but on account of an inevitable confusing of distinct motives that are externally connected by intermediate bridging ones. Thus the *Orpheus* motive is part of the general *Visit to the dead* type, to which the *Visit to the ghosts' village* also belongs. A prominent feature of this episode is apt to be the recounting of how the dead lie as bones, and sleep, during the day, and how broken and rotten utensils are useful in their hands. These ideas are closely allied to others which are clearly of the important type which is based upon the conception that among the spirits, or somewhere in the world, things are the opposite of what they are in the experience of ordinary men — the missile invisible to spirits is an ordinary visible arrow-point. This type, however, the *Reversal of the usual*, or *Opposite of the present*, has no logical or essential connection with the *Orpheus* motive; and were we to eliminate the consideration of specific motives from a desire to reach more general ideas, the *Visit to the ghosts*, which contains elements belonging to two types, might be by one student classed with the *Orpheus* group, by another included in the *Opposite of the present* category. It thus follows that the specifically limited and often concrete idea must remain the unit and basis of comparison in mythological concordance; but the very concreteness and number of such ideas must lead also to the definition of more inclusive groups of conceptions, which, however interconnected and therefore indefinite, will be a necessary means to handling the mass of detailed episodes.

The following are a few of the more conspicuous general types of mythical concepts.

1. *The unsuccessful imitation*, of the host or otherwise.
2. *The trickster tricked*.
3. *Theft* or deceit used to obtain for the world something previously confined to a few.

4. *Final escape from a pursuer*, the means either of flight or pursuit, or both, being of the category which we call magical.

5. *The hidden hero* comprises the *Deformed transformed*, the oppressed becoming victor, the humble origin of the undiscovered champion and the ridicule endured by him, and an indefinite variety of related concepts that are important in American traditions and form the backbone of the European folk-tale.

6. *Tests*, such as the labors of Hercules, the dangerous trials imposed by the evil father-in-law.

7. *The visit to the dead*.

8. *The origin of death*. Several forms of this concept have been mentioned. The idea which is common to them is that death, the most fundamental fact of life, might have been averted but for the trifling act or wish of an individual. The poignancy of the motive obviously lies in the contrast between the triviality of the cause and the overshadowing depth of the effect. Its appeal is deep-seated, or the idea would not be the tale of all mankind. The incident in the Garden of Eden, when divested of the ill-fitting meaning which a specialized theology has succeeded in reading into the puerile but essentially human idea, is purely of this category.

9. *The opposite of the present*. At one time things cannot have been as they are now. Rivers now flow down. Therefore they formerly flowed up, or part up and part down. The imagined condition is analogous to the known, but reversed in certain particulars. In some form this process of thought underlies most mythology, so far as it is an explanation of origin, and most belief in the supernatural. The positive belief that water once flowed uphill is, however, a step farther than the negative one that there once was no sun, and distinguishes the present category of ideas.

10. *The opposite of this world* (*die Verkehrte Welt*) deals in space as the last process of thought does in time, and is therefore not connected with origins.

11. *Transformation*. The most frequent and the natural ending of myth, and to some extent, causally considered, its probable starting-point.

12. *Origin by growth* or birth. The type of world-origin myth found in Polynesia, Japan, Southern California, Hesiod.

13. *Origin by creation* or manufacture. With or without existing material to operate on, but always with the accompaniment of supernatural power. This type of myth is more common than the preceding, but usually less developed in detail. Practically all mythological accounts of the origin of the world, and some that are accounted philosophical, belong to one type or the other.